

Soto Cano AB, Honduras

Earthquake Relief to El Salvador

WHEN members of Joint Task Force Bravo responded to the call for help after an earthquake rumbled across the west coast of El Salvador, COL Michael Wood likened the effort to a paramedic unit stabilizing a patient before transporting him for long-term care.

"Our initial focus was to bring immediate assistance to the citizens and provide a team

to assess the damage," the JTF-B commander said.

Early support came from aircraft and crews of the 1st Battalion, 228th Aviation Regiment, stationed at Soto Cano.

"Our two Chinooks and three Black Hawks brought a heavy-lift capability that no one else could," Wood said of the unit's immediate response to the disaster.

Pilots and crews faced hazardous conditions after the earthquake. With a dusty soccer field as their only safe landing site, they had to deal with limited visibility while negotiating hilly terrain and dodging power lines and soccer goals, said pilot CW3 John Hager.

Still, the crews managed to deliver nearly 158 tons of food, ferry 560 relief workers and soldiers, and reunite

families that had been separated in the chaos that followed the disaster.

"It was very comforting to see that we were helping these people in their time of need," said flight engineer SGT Robert Harper. He said locals had no hospitals to go to or any way to get help. "They were really in a critical state, and they needed to get aid quickly in those first days following the earthquake."

That initial relief effort took place in January. Long-term assistance began when JTF-B teams arrived to determine how best to repair the region's damaged infrastructure.

Soldiers working with the U.S. Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance analyzed the structural integrity of buildings throughout the country, said CPT Jennifer Newhouse, engineering team chief. Their job was to identify the hardest-hit areas so that rebuilding efforts could be prioritized, she said.

Another crew undertook an equally important task: ferrying scientists to Santa Ana to evaluate the effects of the earthquake on the simmering volcano in order to avoid the possibility of an even greater tragedy.

The aircrew came down to about 2,000 feet above the rim of the volcano, giving the geologists a bird's eye view. After the flight, the scientists determined that although the volcano was venting, it didn't pose an immediate danger, as initially thought. — *SPC Jeremy Heckler, JTF-B Public Affairs Office*

Camp Doha, Kuwait

Kuwaiti Bedouin Meet the U.S. Army

BEDOUIN herding sheep, goats or camels are a common sight to those who venture into the deserts of Southwest Asia, but westerners seldom have the



SGT Robert Harper of Company B, 1st Battalion, 228th Aviation Regiment (*inset photo*), coordinates the unloading of his CH-47 with a Salvadoran member of the relief team following the earthquake, which also affected El Salvador's Santa Ana volcano (*above*).



SPC Chris Smith

The Kuwaiti employer (at left) of several Bedouin shares a laugh with CW4 Bob Sidino, Task Force 2-5's safety officer, as SGT Michelle Howze translates.

chance to meet or talk with these nomadic people.

Members of the civil-military operations center, here, however, actively sought contact with local Bedouin to let them know when and where the Army was training, said MAJ Charles Heatherly.

Those visits also provided good opportunities to share information between cultures, the U.S. Army Central Command-Kuwait civil affairs officer said of the CMOC's support of Task Force 2nd Bn., 5th Infantry Regt. The soldiers, part of the 1st Cavalry Division at Fort Hood, Texas, deployed to Kuwait from December through April to train and demonstrate the Army's commitment to maintaining regional peace.

The CMOC created a neutral environment where the two sides could meet, work on relations and resolve issues.

Heatherly said this effort helped establish friendly relations and thus prevented injuries and smoothed the way for training by ensuring that the Bedouin had cleared the ranges before training began.

The Bedouin were also a key source of information, Heatherly said. "They know where the dangerous areas are,

because they live here and see what's going on," he said.

One of the task force's chaplains was another asset to establishing friendly relations. CPT Abdullah Halwe's Muslim faith provided an important connection to the local people, and he understood the area's culture, because he was raised in Syria and speaks Arabic. — *SPC Chris Smith, 14th PA Det.*

Würzburg, Germany

USAREUR Aviation Unit Wins Award

THE 601st Avn. Support Bn. in Katterbach, Germany, is the Army Aviation Association of America's Outstanding Aviation Logistics Support Unit for 2000. Commander LTC Bruce Moore and CSM Guy Niles accepted the award for the unit in February.

The AAAA, a worldwide professional-technical society serving the interests of the Army aviation community, based its selection on Armywide nominations. According to AAAA National Office representative Mary Ellen Kother, the 601st ASB was the best of seven units nominated in the aviation support award category.

The unit's nomination packet explained that the 601st ASB provides aviation supply support and maintenance to 4th Brigade, 1st Infantry Div., and 1st Squadron, 4th Cav. Regt. During deployments to Eastern Europe, 601st ASB soldiers designed and assisted in building an aircraft maintenance facility for permanent use at Camp Bondsteel, Kosovo, and provided support to aviation missions in both Macedonia and Kosovo. — *SPC Jennifer Sardam, 1st Inf. Div. PAO*

Fort Bragg, N.C.

Russian General Visits Fort Bragg

WHILE he's not sure there will be other exchanges in the immediate future, commander in chief of Russian airborne troops Col.-Gen. Georgii Ivanovich Shpak hopes his recent visit to the United States will lead to closer relationships between the Russian and American airborne communities.

Shpak met the soldiers of the 82nd Airborne Div. at Fort Bragg and observed training at

the Joint Readiness Training Center at Fort Polk, La., at the invitation of LTG Dan K. McNeill, commander of XVIII Abn. Corps and Fort Bragg.

The visit included briefings and demonstrations of American equipment and training, and a chance to "fly" an AH-64 Apache helicopter simulator.

"This was a unique opportunity to show the Russians our equipment, and the training and tactics of Army aviators," said CW4 Mike Brilliant of 3rd Bn., 229th Avn. Regt. "I not only showed him who and what the Army is about, I also demonstrated that U.S. soldiers are trained and ready members of the United Nations and prepared for whatever mission may come our way."

"I was very impressed by the professionalism and discipline I saw," Shpak said. "The preparedness, the readiness, of the U.S. Army really left an impression with me. I really enjoyed the openness and friendliness of the soldiers. I hope that this friendship with my U.S. colleagues will continue for a long time." — *SPC Kiandra Kaiser, XVIII Abn. Corps PAO*



SPC Kiandra Kaiser

CW4 Mike Brilliant of the 82nd Airborne Division's 3rd Battalion, 229th Aviation Regiment, orients Col.-Gen. Georgii Shpak to the front seat of an AH-64 Apache.